

May 18, 2017

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
United State Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Garamendi  
United State House of Representatives  
2438 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kamala Harris  
United State Senate  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mark DeSaulnier  
United State House of Representatives  
115 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jerry McNerney  
United State House of Representatives  
2265 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Letter of Support for S. 731 and H.R. 1738, Sacramento San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area Establishment Act

Dear Senators Feinstein and Harris and Representatives Garamendi, DeSaulnier, and McNerney:

The Delta Protection Commission (Commission) appreciates your efforts to recognize the unique cultural, recreational, agricultural and natural resources values of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta through the creation of a National Heritage Area (NHA) in the Delta, Suisun Marsh, and Carquinez Strait. We are writing to express our support for your legislation, S. 731 and H.R. 1738, the Sacramento San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area Establishment Act.

S. 731 and H.R. 1738 would designate the Commission – a State agency that works with Delta residents to identify methods to protect and enhance the Delta as evolving place – as the local coordinating entity for a Delta NHA. Our involvement in the proposed Delta NHA traces back to the 2008 Delta Visions Strategic Plan and 2009 Delta Reform Act, when the California State Legislature charged the Commission with developing:

*A proposal to protect, enhance, and sustain the unique cultural, historical, recreational, agricultural, and economic values of the Delta as an evolving place....The Commission shall include in the proposal a plan to establish state and federal designation of the Delta as a place of special significance, which may include application for a federal designation of the Delta as a National Heritage Area. (California Water Code Section 85301)*

The Commission prepared a NHA Feasibility Study, incorporating public involvement throughout its process via public meetings and presentations, stakeholder interviews, review memos, and study team meetings. The Feasibility Study demonstrated broad support for a NHA through letters of support from local governments and organizations from the five Delta counties (Contra Costa,

Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo). In June 2012, the National Park Service reviewed and found that the Feasibility Study met the criteria for NHA designation, subject to Congressional approval. The study was submitted to Congress for consideration and to the Delta Stewardship Council, a fellow state agency, for inclusion in their Delta Plan.

Pending Congressional designation of a Delta NHA, Commission staff have embarked on the Delta Heritage Area Initiative program to advance and elevate recognition of the Delta's unique values. The staff's intent is to demonstrate the region's capacity for carrying out the NHA. Recent program activities include:

- Managing an effort focused on selecting and prioritizing actions to improve quality of life, economic development, historic preservation, and public safety in the Delta's historic communities;
- Establishing a branding and marketing effort in partnership with the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy;
- Preparing feasibility studies for potential heritage projects;
- Funding the Delta Narratives project, where scholars and cultural institutions collaborated on Delta history essays and identified strategies to inform and educate the public on this history. Fourth grade teachers are currently piloting a curriculum based on the essays;
- Establishing an ongoing interagency working group on Delta as Place, consisting of representatives of federal, state, and local agencies; and
- Conducting a workshop on adaptive re-use strategies for a former Japanese language school.

Creation of a Delta NHA provides an opportunity to grow and build on these successes. NHA designation would provide multiple benefits for the Delta, including creating an enduring grassroots, community-driven approach to heritage conservation and economic development, while drawing attention to the Delta's unique sense of place both nationally and within the state of California.

We value our partnership with you in the push for a Delta NHA and encourage your continued work to promote the legislation and see it enacted.

The Commission voted to approve this letter at its meeting on May 18, 2017.

Sincerely,

Skip Thomson  
Chair

cc: Members, Delta Protection Commission  
Randy Fiorini, Chair, Delta Stewardship Council